

# The NPS Challenge Cost Share Program

**F**unding is a perennial challenge with many National Historic Landmarks (NHLs)—a challenge that in the past the National Park Service (NPS) staff sympathized with, but had not been able to address. While national park units may apply to a variety of special in-house funds such as the Cultural Resource Preservation Program, non-NPS NHLs do not have access to those funds. Until recently, the NPS did not have a vehicle to provide direct financial assistance to NHLs that were not owned by the NPS. In fiscal year 1995, the situation changed. That year Abbott Farm, New Jersey, and the Guajome Ranch House, California, became the first NHLs to receive NPS

consistent with planning documents. Following that vision, the NPS provides a maximum of \$30,000 per project. CCSP allows a maximum of 50% NPS funding for these projects. The matching share contribution may be in the form of cash, goods or services, but must be from a non-federal source.

The CCSP funds are allocated to the NPS regional offices, which select projects within their areas. In addition to the above national requirements, each region usually establishes additional criteria to aid in its selection process. These criteria impart a regional character to the projects selected. For instance, the Intermountain Region contacts NHLs that are threatened or endangered to announce the availability of the program. The regional criteria emphasize a sense of urgency about saving a resource, the creation of multiple partnerships, and evidence of a well planned project. While the Northeast Region also seeks undertakings that will eliminate or alleviate an essential threat, it further seeks innovative approaches that have the possibility of being applied to other sites in the future.

The diversity of the NHL projects which have successfully competed for funds illustrates the range of possibilities available to NHL stewards. Guajome Ranch House NHL, in Vista, California, is one of the best remaining examples of the traditional Spanish-Mexican adobe hacienda with a double courtyard plan. Guajome has often been claimed as the inspiration for *Ramona*, Helen Hunt Jackson's 1884 novel.

The San Diego County Parks and Recreation Department acquired Guajome Ranch in 1973 from the descendants of the Coutts family, the original owners of the ranch. The 1852 adobe ranch house was in poor condition, having received little maintenance and few improvements over the previous 30 years. Shortly after the County acquired the property, a fire and resulting water damage destroyed part of the interior entry hall and a sewing room. The County built a temporary roof over the structure and undertook drainage improvements and temporary stabilization measures to preserve the building until funds for its restoration could be raised. During that time, the dilapidated property, with its whitewashed adobe walls, wide verandas, pepper trees and bougainvillea



*Guajome Ranch House NHL, San Diego County, California. Photo by Ann Huston.*

Challenge Cost Share Program (CCSP) funds. A precedent was established for the following year, fiscal year 1996, when five additional NHLs received CCSP funds.

Although the CCSP has long been a source of special project funding for national park units, only recently have legislation and the criteria been adjusted so that non-NPS NHLs can compete successfully. Now all NPS programs may apply for CCSP funding.

The goal of the CCSP is to increase awareness and participation in the preservation and improvement of recreational, cultural, and natural resources. The projects are generally intended to be small, able to be completed in one year, and



*Restoring the Hangman's Building in Virginia City NHL, Montana.*

lea, exuded the romanticism of its 19th-century "Ramona" period. In 1994, after many years of planning, research, and fund-raising, San Diego County began its \$1.2 million restoration and seismic reinforcement of the ranch house. The NPS's CCSP contribution of \$23,000 paid for the restoration of the building's historic doors and windows. The building was re-dedicated with great fanfare on September 20, 1996, and now features docent-led tours for schoolchildren and the public, hosts occasional weddings, and will be the site of six scenes from the 1997 "Ramona" pageant, marking the players' first appearance in 74 years outside the Ramona Bowl in Hemet, California.

In another project, at Abbott Farm NHL, New Jersey, the Delaware and Raritan Greenway Association used the CCSP funds to produce interpretive signage regarding the significant prehistoric resources in the area. The signs raised awareness of the damage caused by looters in recent years.

The Brandywine Conservancy recognized the need to protect the 10,000 acre Brandywine Battlefield NHL, Pennsylvania, from a serious threat of development. The Conservancy uses CCSP funds to offer land use consultations for private property owners who own historic district parcels that are critical to the Landmark.

When the corner parcel at the key gateway location to Georgetown, Colorado, became available, three partners quickly recognized a golden opportunity. Historic Georgetown, Inc., The Town of Georgetown, and the Clear Creek County Emergency Services District joined together to acquire the site for a combination visitor center and emergency vehicle center. This project met the criteria established by the NPS Intermountain Region for several reasons: the option to buy would soon expire, thus the funding was needed immediately; an interpretive center was a critical need for the historic district; the Georgetown organizations had done extensive planning for both the

acquisition and development of the parcel; and numerous other partners had pledged financial and in-kind assistance. Those partners included government agencies, corporations, foundations, and numerous local businesses and individuals. The Georgetown group has now acquired the corner property, rehabilitated the existing building, and opened for business in August 1996. Over 10,000 travelers visited the center during the first month, indicating the need for such a service. During that summer, the number one information request was the sites to visit in the Georgetown-Silver Plume NHL district.

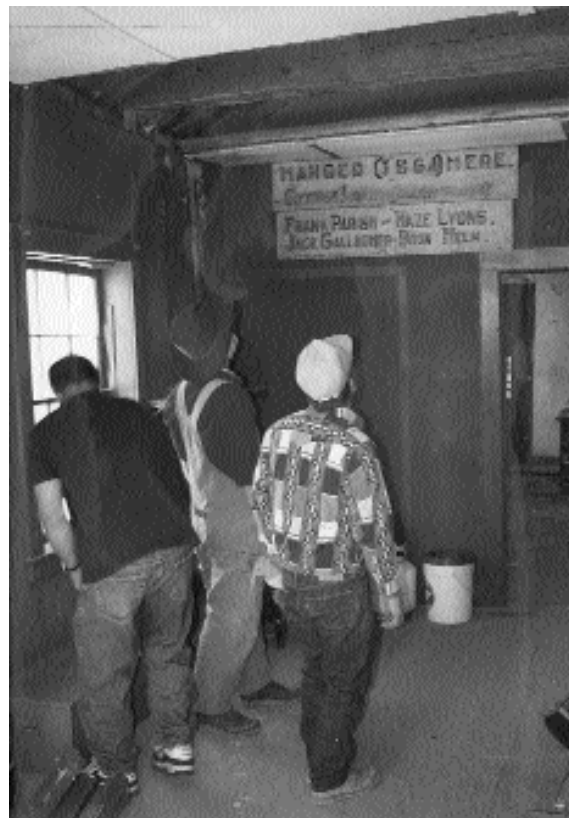
When an icon conservator examined the 175 religious icons in the Holy Ascension Russian Orthodox Cathedral NHL in Unalaska, Alaska, the report was disturbing. Eighty-four percent (146) of the church's icons were found to be in a state of critical deterioration. The Aleut Church Restoration Society is using CCSP funds, along with the matching share, to assist the Parish Council and Aleut community in conserving 10 of the church's most deteriorated icons.

Using CCSP funding, the Robert E. Lee Association developed a computer software program for the archives of Stratford Hall NHL, the Virginia birthplace of General Lee. The program integrates 60 years of architectural, historical and archeological research into a single system that provides instant retrieval of cross-referenced data.

The vigilante era and early African-American women's history meet in the "Hangman's Building"

*Interior of the Hangman's Building in Virginia City NHL, Montana.*

*Photo by Julia C. Smith.*



Early 19th-century Russian Icon in Church of the Holy Ascension NHL, Unalaska, Alaska. Photo by Barbara S. Smith.



building's history. One of their partners, U.S. Forest Service's Region One historic preservation team, supervised the restoration of the building, and trained local volunteers in the process. This strategy created a corps of skilled preservation volunteers who will be able to restore other local buildings, maximizing the effect of the CCSP funds.

At press time, the Intermountain Region had selected its CCSP projects for fiscal year 1997. Four NHLs in the eight-state region were successful in acquiring CCSP funds, totaling

in the Virginia City NHL, Montana. During the historic mining period, the Montana Vigilantes took the law into their own hands and hanged five reputed outlaws from the crossbeam of this then-unfinished building in the center of town. But there is also a "second history" of this building: as the Virginia City Water Company, managed by Sarah Bickford. This remarkable woman was born a slave. After emancipation she came to Virginia City as a servant, and eventually managed the water company for more than 30 years. Today, the town of Virginia City (population 140), with its numerous log, frame, and masonry buildings, is widely recognized as the best preserved 1860s mining town and frontier capital in the West. Even so, many of the buildings are in a fragile, deteriorated condition. The Virginia City Preservation Alliance targeted the "Hangman's Building" as a critical resource to preserve. Before the structure came on the market, the Alliance negotiated a purchase price with the owner. They used the CCSP funds to acquire and restore the building. The 550-member non-profit organization plans to use the structure as a museum, interpreting both aspects of the

almost \$42,000. The Utah Division of Parks and Recreation will erect a gate over the entrance to Danger Cave NHL, protecting it from vandals. The Wyoming Department of Commerce will provide trail improvements, security fencing, and staff for the Independence Rock NHL, especially important during this year's anniversary celebration of the historic Mormon Trail. Prehistoric rock art will be documented at Pictograph Cave NHL by staff of the Western Heritage Center and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. As part of a long-term project, the Town of Silverton, Colorado, will restore a fire-damaged stone wall of the Town Hall in the NHL district.

The CCSP has become an essential funding option for NHLs. The projects funded under this program will enable their stewards to preserve their NHLs, making them available for generations to come. NHL owners interested in learning more about CCSP should contact the National Historic Landmark coordinator in their NPS region.

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Stratford Hall NHL, Westmoreland County, Virginia. A Challenge Cost Share grant paid for the development of a software program to integrate 60 years of architectural, historical, and archeological research to provide instant retrieval of cross-referenced data. Photo by Susan Escherich.

